

Riches to Rags:  
How Does a Declining Hegemon Cope with the Loss of Prestige, Austria as a Case Study

A Senior Honors Thesis

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The western world has seen many hegemons<sup>1</sup>. For almost a century the Aegean was ruled by Athens, and what would one day encompass all of Europe became colonized in the fashion of that great city. Nevertheless Athens refused to surrender her hegemonic prestige<sup>2</sup> and even attempted to increase it. Her empire, Sparta, Sicily and all of the colonies of ancient Greece had no option but to destroy their oppressor. By the end of the Peloponnesian Wars there was nothing left of her Long Walls<sup>3</sup>, her navy, or her empire. From the wars for hegemony which followed, Macedon arose, and under Alexander built the largest political unit ever seen, subduing all of central Europe, Northern Africa and the great Persian Empire, only to be torn apart into three kingdoms, which were slowly annexed by the Roman Empire. This symbol of republican government, dictatorship, imperialism, and western civilization would also slowly decline because of an unquenchable thirst for prestige, but this would take more than five hundred years after its creation in the west, a thousand after that in the east, and less than one hundred years ago in central Europe. Rome fell in 476 A.D. Byzantine followed in 1453. But Vienna pushed on until 1918.

## **I. Introduction**

Originally a Roman fortified camp built on the land of a vanquished people, Vienna started her life off as camp Vindomina, and later as a municipium named Vindobona<sup>4</sup>. In 803 A.D. under Charlemagne she acquired the mission which would define her for the next one thousand years; the task of defending Western Europe from the East. In this case it was the

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis the word hegemon does not necessarily refer to a super-power with global dominance such as Britain during Pax Britannica, or the United States today, but rather to a city, country, or empire which maintains political dominance over a particular geographical territory, outside of its sovereign boundaries.

<sup>2</sup> By hegemonic prestige, I am referring to the political influence a hegemon has over a particular geographic area.

<sup>3</sup> Athens Long Walls connected the walled in city to her walled in sea port Piraeus. Part of Pericles grand strategy, these walls helped her survive as long as she did outnumbered and hated for the cruelty with which she administered her empire.

<sup>4</sup> Crankshaw, p.6

Avars, and her name properly changed to the Avarian Mark<sup>5</sup>. After Charlemagne's death<sup>6</sup>, Western Europe was once again invaded, until 961 A.D. when the Saxon King, Otto the Great, while donning Charlemagne's crown defeated the Magyars at Lechfeld. Precisely under Otto and his Babenberg descendents, Austria or as she was known then the Ottonian Mark, would acquire the second mission of her millennium, the role of administrative center of the Holy Roman Empire<sup>7</sup>.

After a short tenure under the Slavic rule of Crown Prince and later King Ottokar II of Bohemia, which followed the fall of the House of Babenberg in 1246, Austria<sup>8</sup> became ruled by a Swabian Swiss Count and German King, Rudolph IV of Habsburg; her first tenure under the family which, pending a brief interlude between 1291 and 1438 when other families were elected, would rule her until 1918. In 1453 as a result of the *Privilegium Maius*, Austria was established as a separate entity outside of the German Reich and acquired her status as a sovereign nation. As early as 1440, her King Frederick III began carving the initials *AIEOU*<sup>9</sup> all over his castles, cathedrals and public buildings. Not much later as a form of consolidation, the Habsburgs, at this point Kings of both Austria and Germany, proclaimed their possessions the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> At this point the Mark consisted mainly of German Franks and other tribes, Brook-Shepherd, p.3

<sup>6</sup> After the fall of Charlemagne, the Avarian Mark was overrun by Slavs and Magyars, Crankshaw, p.62

<sup>7</sup> After defeating the Magyars and conquering Lombardy the Pope John XII crowned Otto Emperor of Rome. In 976 his son Otto II handed the Ottonian Mark or Ostmark (East Mark) over to the Babenbergs. It is also at this time that royal family moved their residence to Vienna. Consequently the Ottonian Mark, at that point a Margrave, rose to the rank of Duchy, Brook-Shepherd, pp. 4-10, and was appropriately rechristened Oesterreich, Crankshaw, p.62

<sup>8</sup> By this point the Ottonian Mark had acquired Styria, Brook-Shepherd, pp.4-10

<sup>9</sup> His diary later revealed that this acronym stood for *Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo* 'Austria will survive all others on earth' Crankshaw, p.82

<sup>10</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 4-10. There are several opinions as what this exactly entitled the Habsburgs to. As Brook-Shepherd explains it, at this point this remnant of the Roman Empire, which embodied the Union in Peace of Western Christendom, was still united very strongly through the Catholic faith. As ruler of this Empire, the Emperor possessed the sole abilities to create kingdoms and elevate princes to kings. Even the later King of Prussia Frederick I required the Emperor's permission to dawn the crown, since the Divine Right of Emperors was needed to bestow the Divine Right on Kings. On the other hand, Crankshaw contends that by this point the Imperial crown was void completely of its virtue and that the only connection between the Habsburgs and Charlemagne was his sword which

Within one hundred years the Habsburgs under Charles would also acquire the Spanish crown, and the Portuguese, American and African colonies which came with it. “By 1519 this empire stretching from the Danube Basin across Western Europe and then over the Atlantic Ocean [...] was truly an empire on which the sun never set”. This merger lasted until 1555 when Charles abdicated his Austrian crown to his brother Ferdinand I, keeping the Spanish half to himself. Ferdinand quickly increased his half by claiming the Crowns of Bohemia and Hungary for himself after their king was killed by the Turks, although the hegemony over these lands was consolidated only in 1699 after the Turks were officially booted out of Hungary<sup>11</sup>. As Kennedy contends, “For about a century and a half after 1500, a continent-wide combination of kingdoms, duchies, and provinces ruled by [...] the members of the Hapsburg family threatened to become the predominant political and religious influence in Europe”, although he concedes that, “Given the rivalries endemic to the European states system, therefore, it was hardly likely that the Habsburgs would remain unchallenged”<sup>12</sup>. Austrian success early on during the Thirty Years War supported the earlier premise, but as the length of the war and the terms of the Peace of Westphalia<sup>13</sup> demonstrated, Austria lacked the resolve to rule all of Europe.

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was ceremoniously passed on, Crankshaw, p.60. Aeneas Sylvius (later Pope Pius II) agreed: ““Although you acknowledge the Emperor for your king and master, he possesses but a precarious sovereignty; he has no power; you obey him only when you choose; and you are seldom inclined to obey. You are all desirous to be free; neither the princes nor the states render him what is due; he has no revenues, no treasure. Hence you are involved in endless contests and wars; hence also rapine, murder, conflagrations, and a thousand evils which arise from divided authority””, Crankshaw, p.78. Nevertheless Crankshaw does concede that some of the German electors still viewed the Emperor as a temporal head, Crankshaw, p. 69; he also compares this Empire to the failed League of Nations, Crankshaw, p. 78.

<sup>11</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 11-13; the quote is on p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, pp. 31-33. The first quote is on p. 31, the second on p. 33.

<sup>13</sup> It was this treaty which lit the fuse which would slowly mark the doom of Austria. First, by allowing the various German Princes the ability to chose Protestantism over Catholicism, Austria allowed these Princes the ability to decide their allegiance to the Vatican, and hence the Holy Roman Empire. If Catholicism lost its prestige, then the Empire and Emperor, whose prestige was legitimized by this Crown, lost the ability to demand allegiance based on Divine Right. The door was open for demanding sovereignty from the crown. Second, another stipulation gave Brandenburg Farther Pomerania. This territorial union would in 1701 become the kingdom of Prussia, the same state which would later lead the whole of Germany to demand sovereignty from Austria. “Far from gaining the domination over Europe which they had hoped for and expected, the Habsburgs had to sign a document which brought into being an entirely new and rival power which was to dispute their supremacy and, finally, soon after

Nevertheless in 1699 by expelling the Turks, Austria legitimized her prestige as hegemon of central Europe. She defended Christianity from the threat of Islam not only in her own backyard of Marchfeld, but in the distant lands of Eastern Europe as well. Without her, England, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and all of Christian civilization could potentially fall victim to the Muslim menace. Keeping with her original mission, she was the last Mark of Christian Civilization and the first line of defense in case the dam ever broke. She was necessary, a Christian hero, and on paper on behalf of the Roman Empire, administered its remains in Italy, Germany, and Eastern Europe. Not only had she already dominated the political climate of Europe for a couple of centuries, as well as most of the continent and its overseas colonies while under Charles, but even after her bid for European hegemony failed, she remained the strongest power on the continent as well hegemon in central Europe. For a time she even unofficially ruled France, for Queen Marie Antoinette was a Habsburg.

Oddly enough the decapitation of this Queen would lead to the eventual death of Austria as a hegemonic state. Slowly the Napoleonic Wars, the Wars of Italian and German unification, and World War I bled Austria out of existence. Following the footsteps of her predecessors, Athens, Macedon and Rome, she disappeared from world politics, losing all her hegemony on the way. Austria had everything and lost everything. She went from imperial riches to the rags of the Third Reich; from the most dominant European nation to the least. The loss of prestige was ultimate. What began in 1792 with the rise of the French Republic, culminated in 1938 when she ceased to exist. How did this hegemon, like all inevitably will, cope with the loss of its prestige?

## **II. The Realist Prediction**

### **The Realist Premise**

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wresting it from them, drown in a vortex of its own creation, dragging down the Habsburgs with it: the Hohenzollerns of Brandenburg”, Crankshaw, p. 128.

“It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever”<sup>14</sup>.

The above justification by Thucydides for writing his account of the Peloponnesian War farsightedly rings true to the modern realist. It touches on two key elements of this dominant theory of international relations: first, the words “human nature being what it is” implies that human nature does not change, realists agree; the second statement, “repeated in the future” implies that war is inevitable. This follows logically, considering the foundation of realist theory.

The primary motivation of any individual is to survive to live another day. A proper government affords the necessary protection to meet this primary motivation. Yet the international system lacks a higher authority and for this very reason is in a constant state of anarchy. As a result, although states guarantee individuals’ survival, there is nothing to guarantee their own. States must live in constant fear that they will be eliminated. The only way to guarantee survival is to ensure that one has the capability to protect oneself from others, or in other words a relative advantage. Accordingly states are not primarily concerned with absolute gains<sup>15</sup>, but with relative gains<sup>16</sup>. This implies that all relative change must be resisted with all means possible, including war. Prestige is no exception.

Prestige defines who has pull in international politics. It “is the every day currency of international relations.” How a state acquires it has changed over the centuries. In ancient times, ideology conferred prestige; Athens and Sparta received their prestigious statuses as the leaders of democratic opposition against Persian authoritarianism. Throughout the Renaissance prestige

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<sup>14</sup> Thucydides, p.48

<sup>15</sup> Those gains which leave either A, and/or B better off

<sup>16</sup> Those gains which compare A’s advantage vis-à-vis B’s.

depended on dynastic glory. After the rise of the secular state following the Peace of Westphalia, prestige became closely associated with the capabilities of a state in the international system. The Concert of Europe implied that prestige no longer depended as much on actual state capability as it did on membership in this exclusive club. Following the First World War until the end of the Cold War, ideology once again played a role; this time it was the leaders of capitalism against those of communism. In modern days it is bestowed by military and economic abilities very much in a similar fashion as the pre-Concert days. What the following implies for this investigation is that whatever bestowed it, prestige has always and continues to define a state's role in the international system<sup>17</sup>. Those who have it, dominate. Those who do not must follow. This of course implies that prestige is relative; some must have influence, and others must be influenced.

The danger with relative calculations is that change is inevitable. Gilpin has developed a rather comprehensive cycle of war and change in international politics. Considering the cyclical nature of the system there is no clear starting point, but for the purposes of argument, equilibrium shall serve as one. At equilibrium the status quo is stable. It is clear who the dominant and subordinate actors of the system are. As time passes that which gave the dominant state power, such as military and economic innovations, slowly diffuses throughout the system while at the same time the dominant power begins to stagnate. Consequently as the subordinate powers increase in strength and make the status quo harder to manage, the dominant state's stagnation makes it harder to adjust to the new demands; "the preservation of the status quo becomes even more difficult, and the international system enters a state of disequilibrium"<sup>18</sup>. What is key to this

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<sup>17</sup> Schweller, pp.27-33; the quote is on p. 27

<sup>18</sup> Gilpin, pp.156-187; the quote is on p. 157

disequilibrium is that once a 'critical point' of no return has been crossed, it can only be fixed by a new status quo; there is no going back to the 'good old days'<sup>19</sup>.

As subordinate powers rise to the rank of greatness, the international system must make room. The only way to do so is at the cost of the status quo powers. The international system is slow to adjust causing a gap between the relative status of a power and its relative capabilities<sup>20</sup>. The result is a growing gap that must be crossed sooner or later, and a status quo power will prefer the second of the two choices. Rather than make the adjustments necessary to reestablish equilibrium by readjusting its self perception, the declining power usually makes matters worse because it refuses any change, and typically does everything in its power to oppose it<sup>21</sup>, even if it means preventive war.

The inevitability of such a war is the consequence of the very nature of decline; if B is relatively increasing its ability vis-à-vis A, the longer A waits, the harder the battle will be. This is only expounded because states feel losses much more so than gains; a temporary gain somewhere will typically do little to quell the pain of loss. Also playing a huge role is reputation; no one wants to lose a game of chicken. Consequently the closer the actor gets to the possibility of crashing, the more irrational his decision making becomes<sup>22</sup>. Fed by the implications of domino theory states will often do all they can to keep that first domino from falling<sup>23</sup>, fearing the new status quo they will be forced to accept if they do nothing<sup>24</sup>. Preventive war is just one more chance for the declining power to reassert itself and preserve the status quo<sup>25</sup>. Yet preventive war is typically frowned upon, and hurts the aggressor's diplomatic relations, often

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<sup>19</sup> Doran, p.392

<sup>20</sup> This suggests that a states self-perception must adjust to the changing status quo. The primary goal of this paper is to explore how Austria met this challenge.

<sup>21</sup> Doran, pp. 377-392; Snyder(1993), pp. 2-25

<sup>22</sup> Levy, pp. 87-101

<sup>23</sup> Snyder(1993), p.4; Snyder (2003), p32

<sup>24</sup> Fearon, pp.385-407

<sup>25</sup> Walzer, pp.76-82



resulting in complete isolation<sup>26</sup>. Even more dangerous is the fact that it can quickly get out of hand, and grow from a war which shocks the system, to one which can destroy it<sup>27</sup>.

Massive war occurs when a critical point has been crossed. Usually the aggressive government has unsuccessfully struggled to oppose a profound negative change in the system and decides to risk it all, while the other states of the system fail to guide it towards a peaceful transition<sup>28</sup>. Such wars will occur when there is an extreme contradiction between the status quo and the actual distribution of power<sup>29</sup>. Three particular conditions arise as the tide approaches. First, states begin to feel that time and opportunity are closing in and as a result international relations become a zero-sum game. Second, the conflict at hand takes on psychological values causing states to give the war more significance than it necessarily deserves, inadvertently making the situation seem even more irreversible. Finally, the primary actors loose control of the very cataclysm they started<sup>30</sup>. When the war ends, the cycle starts again. A new hierarchy of prestige is established in relation to the present distribution of power. When a new gap forms and the hierarchy looses its credibility the cycle of change will begin again; “it has always been thus and always will be, until men either destroy themselves or learn to develop an effective mechanism of peaceful change”<sup>31</sup>.

### *The Realist Model*

The above suggests that Austria should have coped in the following way as her self-perception adjusted to fit the new status quo. At first, she should have failed to recognize that any change had occurred. Second, once it was obvious that a transformation was underway,

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<sup>26</sup> Snyder, pp.32-40

<sup>27</sup> Gilpin, p.191

<sup>28</sup> Doran, pp. 373-393

<sup>29</sup> Schweller, pp.44-45

<sup>30</sup> Gilpin, pp.198-202

<sup>31</sup> Gilpin, p.210.

Austria should have taken steps to oppose this transformation. Third, after her initial efforts at resisting a change in prestige failed, she should have resorted either to preventive war or expansion. Fourth, after all the following methods failed, Austria either should have relinquished her fate to the new status quo, or as Gilpin suggests more likely, destabilized the system to such a degree that a massive hegemonic war was the only way to restore equilibrium. Fifth, once equilibrium had been restored, it is expected that Austria should have accepted her new role as a peripheral power.

The following case study supports all the above postulates. Austria's actions during and after the Napoleonic Wars support the first. Her role in forming the Concert of Europe and actions during the Revolutions of the 1840s and the Crimean and Prussian Wars support the second. Her war against Italy and expansion in the Balkans respectively support the two methods of the third proposition. All events leading up to and including World War I support the fourth. Her adjustments after the Prussian War and behavior after both World Wars supports the fifth, although her lack in coming to grips after defeat to Prussia and the actions of her royal family suggest there is some lag during which the declined hegemon must come to terms with its new position.

### **III. Failure to Recognize**

#### **The Napoleonic Wars**

On October 6, 1790 Leopold II was crowned (at this point a Habsburg tradition) Holy Roman Emperor. This was done as an act of defiance to the Constituent Assembly in Paris which had two months previously abolished all feudal rights, including those of the German principalities of Alsace and Lorraine<sup>32</sup>. What followed were the Napoleonic Wars, and two peace

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<sup>32</sup> Since the Principalities of Alsace and Lorraine were at that time Habsburg possessions, France had no right to direct their policy; hence this was an act of war against Austria.

treaty signings by Austria; the first one after Prussia's defeat, and the second one after Austria declared war once again as part of the Second Coalition<sup>33</sup>. Both were humiliations for Austria. In the first treaty she agreed to cede her provinces in the southern Netherlands to France and to recognize the Cisalpine Republic of Lombardy<sup>34</sup>. In the second at Lunéville, she was forced to recognize the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, as France's boundaries, as well as all the puppet republics Napoleon left in his wake.

On May 1804 Pope Pius VII crowned Napoleon as Emperor of France. Since, "Europe had room for only one latter-day Charlemagne"<sup>35</sup>, and since on May 1804 Napoleon technically became that, on August 10, 1804 Francis decided that the best way to defend his possessions against Napoleon was to consolidate his Empire into the Austrian Empire, although he continued to sign his documents 'Roman Emperor Elect' next to 'Hereditary Emperor of Austria'. This way Napoleon could not claim rule over Germany. This of course resulted in retaliation at Austerlitz, the eventual Peace of Pressburg, and the concession of Austrian prestige in Western Europe to the Confederation of the Rhine<sup>36</sup>.

The loss of the Holy Roman Empire was a devastating blow to Austria's prestige, yet Francis coped with this loss via denial, suggesting to all the German principalities that the 'Hereditary Empire of Austria' would take care of them, and retaining for this new creation the traditional Holy Roman symbol of the double-headed eagle, and traditional colors of black and gold<sup>37</sup>. With much of the old Empire under the Confederation of the Rhine, Austria believed in a

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<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, pp. 121-125

<sup>34</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 34-35

<sup>35</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 35

<sup>36</sup> Austria had to cede what she still held of the Venetian Republic to France, Tyrol and Vorarlberg to Bavaria, and the rest of her German lands to Baden and Württemberg. A procession of sixteen German states on July 17, 1806 led by Bavaria, Württemberg and Baden assembled in Paris to repudiate all the laws of the Holy Roman Empire, and created the Confederation of the Rhine, with Napoleon receiving the title of 'Protector', Brook-Shepherd, p. 35-36.

<sup>37</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 37

status quo which no longer existed<sup>38</sup>. The erroneous declaration of war in 1809 resulted in defeat once again. Not only had France managed to crush Austria on the field of battle again, but Napoleon slept in Schönbrunn Palace while her true inhabitant was a refugee in Hungary. The Peace of Schönbrunn was another devastating blow<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless three years later Austria was back at war with Napoleon along with the other powers of Eurasia. After coalition victory, the return of Napoleon, and his mistake in going to Russia, the French scourge was finally done in, and with the Second Treaty of Paris, Austria regained most of the possessions she had lost during the wars, and the prestige they took with them<sup>40</sup>.

The Napoleonic Wars dealt a huge blow to Austrian prestige. Nevertheless by keeping the flag and colors of her past, she pretended that nothing had changed. She continued to believe in her superiority over France, and consequently signed a handful of peace settlements which followed losses. Nonetheless in 1815 her stubbornness during the Napoleonic Wars to accept that French dominance over German lands and the change in the status quo paid off as she emerged with her lost territories regained and prestige restored. She could not have done so on her own, and one can only wonder what would have happened had Napoleon stayed out of Russia. It was now clear that Austria could no longer administer Europe by herself, and France now posed an ever pressing challenge in the west, but for the time being this challenge was kept in check by a defensive alliance signed between Austria, Prussia, Russia and Britain. Her hegemonic prestige over Germany and parts of Italy was restored, and for the time being she was the first line of

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<sup>38</sup> Kennedy, p.127

<sup>39</sup> This time Austria ceded her share of Poland; parts of Carinthia, Carniola, and Croatia; the rest of her Adriatic possessions; and her German territories along the Bavarian border. "The Emperor, at one blow, lost some 3.25 million subjects" Brook-Shepherd, p.37

<sup>40</sup> Kennedy, pp. 136-138. With the signing of the treaty the following territories were entrenched in the Austrian Empire: Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia, Galicia, Silesia, Slovakia, Transylvania, Bukovina, Croatia-Slavonia, Carniola, Gorizia, Istria, Dalmatia, Lombardy and Venetia, Kiste, p.9. Austria was also handed the title of President of the German Confederation. "Austria was astride the Mediterranean as well as the Danube, and president to boot of the re-established Germanic Confederation. The Emperor had more prestige than ever, as well as more than four million new subjects", Brook-Shepherd, p. 42.

defense against the return of French aggression<sup>41</sup>. “To all but an extremely radical minority, the idea of Europe without an Austrian empire, the reincarnation of the time-honored Holy Roman empire, to preserve the balance of power, was unthinkable”<sup>42</sup>. Her hegemonic prestige in central Europe was a key element of the status quo<sup>43</sup>, and for the time being none of the powers of Europe would dare challenge that. Of course the war had eliminated the pre-Napoleonic status quo, and although certain aspects of this status quo reappeared in 1815, other key ones did not, and Austrian failure to acknowledge them would lead to her destruction.

#### **IV. Opposition to Change**

##### *The Concert of Europe: Metternich’s Vision*

The goal of the Concert of Europe’s key engineer Prince Clemens Metternich was to establish a global peace so as to freeze the status quo after the Napoleonic Wars forever. Rather than seeking a global order in which Austria could dominate, he simply wanted global peace. His model consisted of three fundamentals: 1) domestic sovereignty of all nations; 2) enforcement and preservation of treaties; 3) agreement by all parties to resolve disputes through diplomacy. This was based on his belief that there were only two ways for a state to guarantee its survival, by entering a treaty based federation of states or via alliance with other great powers. He believed Austria could only survive by following the former of these two paths<sup>44</sup>, since the later and the coalitions it produced resulted in two bloody centuries of warfare. This reinforces what Schweller proposed in his paper. The peace of Westphalia had changed what conveyed prestige.

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<sup>41</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 41-42

<sup>42</sup> Kiste, p.10

<sup>43</sup> “The Habsburg Empire, sprawled across Europe from the northern-Italian plain to Galicia, would act as the central fulcrum to the balance, checking French ambitions in western Europe, and in Italy, preserving the status quo in Germany against both the “Great German” nationalists and the Prussian expansionists, and posing a barrier to Russian penetration of the Balkans. It was true that each of these tasks was supported by one or more the other Great Powers, depending upon the context; but the Habsburg Empire was vital to the functioning of this complex five-sided checkmate, if only because it seemed to have the greatest interest of all in freezing the 1815 settlement,” Kennedy, pp. 162-163.

<sup>44</sup> Sofka, pp. 115-133.

Austria thought herself to be great for her dynastic abilities in an era when state capability conveyed prestige. Metternich fought to return to the earlier with success; during the Concert Era prestige was conveyed via membership of an elite club and not state capability. He established an order in which Austria could play the role of equal despite her actual capabilities. It was an international society of states which had to cooperate externally but could do whatever they chose internally.

### *The Revolutions of the 1840s*

The Napoleonic Wars brought more to Europe than bloodshed, they brought liberalism. Where this new ideology reared its head in the Austrian Empire, just as the government refused to allow any decline of international prestige, any threat to its domestic prestige was eliminated. This led to a very bloody end to the 1840s for Austria internally, although externally she was at peace. Any questions of self-determination in Italy, Hungary, or Austria herself were met with military force. The consequence of this violent resistance to liberalism was the alienation of her liberal neighbors on whom she depended to maintain her position in Europe, France and Britain<sup>45</sup>. Nevertheless her neighbor to the east, Russia, too shared an interest in Austria remaining an absolute monarchy like her, and in 1849 came to her assistance and helped crush the last of the internal revolutions. Oddly enough Austria failed to repay the favor during the Crimean War, one of her many mistakes in coping with the loss of prestige which began after the Napoleonic Wars.

### *Italy*

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<sup>45</sup> Kennedy, pp. 159-160

The Austrian populace and the state which governed it never expected troubles with Italy<sup>46</sup>. The way they treated their subjects suggested nothing less. One example were the nobles of Milan who although recognized as so by fellow Italians, had their titles officially banned in 1818 by Imperial heraldic commissions. Milan was not alone. In general all Italian titles of rank were lowered once they entered Vienna, and most Italian nobles were barred from Austrian courts<sup>47</sup>. After a while Austrian policy took the following form: “The people love us; the nobles hate us; we must, therefore, annihilate them”. This backfired since the heavy taxation which followed led to a serious depression in Northern Italy, and caused the peasants to side with the Carbonari and Nobles<sup>48</sup>. The Emperor responded with Order 324<sup>49</sup>, but this did not quell discontent, and what started as Carbonari movements in the 1820s, by June 1848 had exploded to outright war between Austria and King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia. The Austrian commander in Italy proved very effective and by August this insurrection was over<sup>50</sup>.

### *Austria*

In the 1840s a strong economic depression in Vienna led the populace to demand changes from the government which for the previous couple of decades, under Metternich, had become very oppressive. The end of feudalism was not enough. On March 12, 1848 the Emperor

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<sup>46</sup> The majority of the population had no political opinions and sects were less active in Austrian Italy than in the rest of the peninsula. There was also the belief that inter-city rivalry prevented any Anti-Austrian movement, Sked, p. 33

<sup>47</sup> For example Italian dukes in Vienna were known as counts, Sked, p.62

<sup>48</sup> Sked, p.134

<sup>49</sup> “A higher form of Carbonari, called Young Italy. The aim of this society is the overthrow of existing governments and of the complete social order; the means which it employs are subversion and outright murder through secret agents. It goes without saying therefore that anyone who knows of these aims but whom, none the less, joins Young Italy is guilty of high treason. He is also guilty even if, given that he knows its aims, he merely fails to prevent its progress or to point out its members and, as guilty, is liable to punishment under Article 5 of the Articles of War. Likewise from the date of publication of this order, no one will be able to excuse himself by saying that he was a member of Young Italy and yet was ignorant of its objectives. On the other hand, anyone who, out of remorse, reveals the members of the same, its statutes, the aims and undertakings of its leaders, if there are still secrets or if their work can still be prevented, is assured complete immunity from punishment and his actions will remain secret” Sked, p. 44

<sup>50</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 62

conceded to a demand that Metternich resign<sup>51</sup>. The next set of demands which included power sharing with a representative body, led to the siege of the Hofburg on May 15<sup>th</sup>, the exile of the royal family, and the concession to establish a single-chamber Parliament known as the Reichstag<sup>52</sup>. The Emperor returned on August 12<sup>th</sup>, but after the lynching of Count Theodor Latour on October 6<sup>th</sup>, the family once again took flight leaving it up to Windisch-Graetz and Martial Law. The capital surrendered on October 29<sup>th</sup>, incurring 2000 casualties along the way. The government's power was then reconsolidated in two ways. First, Emperor Ferdinand, who was mentally challenged, stepped down allowing Francis Joseph to accede to the throne on December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Second, a new constitution was established the Monarchy as a constitutional one. In reality the Emperor's 'special powers' demonstrated that "Behind this liberal screen, however, stood the substance of almost unfettered monarchical power"<sup>53</sup>.

### *Hungary*

The Hungarians had already revolted in the early 1700s and failed, but in the late 1840s the climate seemed right to do so again. The underlying reasons were similar to those in Austria. The people wanted civil rights and the end of feudalism. These demands increased to full separation after Hungary, via the Reichstag, was reduced to the level of all of Austria's other possessions rather than as her crown jewel; after all the Magyars viewed themselves as equals with the imperial nation<sup>54</sup>. While Austria was brought back to control with relatively little force, it proved much harder to do so in the Hungarian half. After Hungary overwhelmingly defended

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<sup>51</sup> Kiste, p.11

<sup>52</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 60-61

<sup>53</sup> The ability to veto any legislation; ability to appoint and dismiss all ministers and officials; his mandate which could dissolve parliament, and a stipulation that in case of an emergency he could rule unhindered, Brook-Shepherd, pp. 62-68

<sup>54</sup> The Elective Crown of St. Stephen was handed to the Austrian Emperor after his defeat of the Turkish forces. Rather than allowing Austria to engulf Hungary into a province, the Magyars only saw themselves ruled by her as long as her Emperor, by their choice, was allowed to wear the crown. When the state demonstrated in 1848 that membership in the Empire was no longer elective, the Magyars wanted out, Brook-Shepherd, p. 62-67.



her independence, on May 1, 1849 the Emperor was forced to request Russia's help<sup>55</sup>. On August 13<sup>th</sup> at Világos, the Hungarians surrendered to the Russian commander Paskievicz<sup>56</sup>.

"The young Emperor's reign had started with an absolutist regime draped in liberal verbiage being proclaimed from the Austrian half of his realm, and a bloodbath carried out in the Hungarian half"<sup>57</sup>. Italy, Austria, and Hungary reaffirmed that a change in Emperors did not change the way the Empire coped with the loss of prestige. When Italy and Hungary asked for their sovereignty and vis-à-vis a decrease in Austrian prestige, they paid with blood. When the Viennese demanded a role in administering this empire, and hence again threatened Imperial prestige within the Empire, again blood was the cost. The Empire resorted to oppression so as to quell revolt, believing that if enough force was used, the status quo and Austria's prestige would remain. Oddly enough, the effect was completely different. Asking for help from Russia only proved what the world was coming to understand; the once stable Empire State was beginning to break apart and could no longer hold herself together without outside help. The new Emperor, who took power during these revolutions, was in complete denial<sup>58</sup>. Kiste contends perhaps he had the right to do so<sup>59</sup>. Nonetheless the close call he had with assassination in 1853 should have changed this perspective somewhat<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Tsar Nicholas had assured Francis Joseph from the moment he received his throne that he had an army in Galicia ready to march the minute the order was given.

<sup>56</sup> Sked, p. 95

<sup>57</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 69

<sup>58</sup> After his accession to the throne Francis Joseph took two lessons from the revolutions. First, his dynasty had triumphed over liberalism, and the suppression of this ideology must be one key task of government. Second, the army had ended the revolutions; hence this entity must both be the foundation behind his power and the glue which keeps his kingdom together, Brook-Shepherd, p. 70. The irony of the situation might only be obvious in retrospect: it was an oppressive police state which led to the revolutions in the first place, yet Francis Joseph believed this was the exact way to keep things from repeating themselves.

<sup>59</sup> "As the successor of the holy Roman emperors and sovereign of one of the foremost European powers, he was the most powerful figure in the continent, if not the world [...] only Tsar Nicholas I of Russia could rival him in terms of imperial prestige. No other ruler could run him close", Kiste, p.19

<sup>60</sup> While taking a stroll on February 18, 1853, Francis Joseph stopped to watch a regiment exercise. While his surveillance was underway a Hungarian tailor's apprentice by the name of Johann Libényi lunged at him with a

## The Crimean War

During the Crimean War Austria played a balancing act which proved detrimental to its future. Rather than siding immediately with Russia, what would seem the wise decision considering their internal similarities and her assistance in quelling the Hungarian revolts only four years previously, Austria considered joining the liberal side of the battle. The result was indecision which ruined her in the eyes of all the powers involved, as well as making Russia who had been her sister in battle, a virtual enemy. The story turned outright tragic in March 1855, when Czar Nicholas died, with many blaming Austria for his death<sup>61</sup>. England and France were disgruntled because Austria took forever to make up her mind, and in the end did not help the war effort, although her ultimatum definitely played a part.

The implications for Austria were bad. King Frederick William in Prussia felt betrayed that his ally broke neutrality without consent, a feeling shared by many in the German Federation<sup>62</sup>. After the war, Turkey, France and England felt no reason to show gratitude to Austria; consequently she played no role during the Treaty of Paris negotiations<sup>63</sup>. Russia had been turned into a virtual enemy<sup>64</sup>. After helping her in 1849 and backing her against Turkey in 1853<sup>65</sup> this was a real stab in the back for the Czar. He went as far as to give away the statuette of Francis Joseph which he used to treasure, and told the Austrian ambassador that he was the most foolish king in history for having backed Austria previously<sup>66</sup>. The Russian ambassador conveyed a similar message in Vienna. “I am sorry for the young Emperor, for his bearing has

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knife. The Emperor was saved from instant death by a woman’s scream which caused him to turn his head and become the victim of a cut on his neck, rather than fatal stab, Kiste, p. 24

<sup>61</sup> Some said that his death was suicide as a result of the shame he felt from being defeated, while his own son Tsar Alexander II claimed it was from a broken heart caused by Austrian ingratitude, Kiste, p.27

<sup>62</sup> Kiste, p. 28

<sup>63</sup> The English Foreign secretary summed up European sentiment following the war, “The Austrians lacked finesse and, it would appear, loyalty,” Cassels, p.10

<sup>64</sup> Sked, p.174

<sup>65</sup> Austria threatened Turkey with war, if the later invaded Montenegro

<sup>66</sup> Sked, pp. 172-173

so offended the Russians that he can be certain of never a quiet hour for the rest of his reign”<sup>67</sup>.

After the war, “she had emerged isolated...But then, as the Habsburgs cheerfully admitted, gratitude was never among their strongest points”<sup>68</sup>. Worst of all, this war had destroyed the Concert which Austria was so key in engineering forty years prior. What motivated her to turn on her ally?

Her foreign minister Buol told the Emperor that Russia’s occupation of the Balkans posed a threat to Austrian and German interests, and an alliance with Britain and France was necessary to contain Russia. Further if war did occur, the location of battle, which would be the Balkans instead of the Crimea, would be strategically friendly<sup>69</sup>. He also believed that by following this route he could convince the allies to recognize Austria’s territorial boundaries<sup>70</sup>, and allow the contested principalities to enter her protection after the war. On the other hand an alliance with Russia would certainly mean a lack of cooperation, as well as an attack by the Western Powers from abroad and new revolutions in Hungary and Italy from within; he was even concerned that Prussia would push her claim to Germany in the aftermath which followed that route. Neutrality was out of the question, because that would deprive him the ability to influence the diplomacy which followed<sup>71</sup>. In contrast General Hess argued that Russia was Austria’s ally against revolution, she was not physically prepared to wage war, and if she lost the allies would be sure to keep in mind her internal revolutions when redrawing Europe.

Nevertheless Francis Joseph sided with Britain and England, why? Sked suggests the reason was Francis Joseph himself. He wanted his Empire to be in par with France, Britain and

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<sup>67</sup> Cassels, p.10

<sup>68</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 77

<sup>69</sup> This way Austria could defend herself better against the Russians, as well as play a powerful role in the diplomacy which followed. Basically Buol was saying that by joining, Austria would take the lead in the war as well as the negotiations which followed, Kiste, p.172

<sup>70</sup> In other words, the Italian states would lose their French support

<sup>71</sup> Sked, pp. 172-174

Russia, and his coming to the throne at time of military success filled him with hot air. He also saw Russia as a natural enemy as he himself wrote, ““It is hard to have to stand up to former friends, but there is no alternative in politics, and in the East, Russia is always our enemy””<sup>72</sup>.

### *The Prussian War*

As far as the German world was concerned the Habsburgs never expected to loose their Holy Roman Empire. “The Habsburg dynasty possessed an almost mystic and still unchallenged prestige in the German world [...] Such prestige could wane and damage itself as it did. But the monarchy which carried it could never be eclipsed spiritually on the German stage by Prussia or any other power [...] In the end, it would have to be swept right off that stage by force”<sup>73</sup>. By the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were two competing theories for the future of Germany floating around the Frankfurt Parliament: the ‘Great German’<sup>74</sup> option, and the ‘Small German’<sup>75</sup> counterpart.

Although originally raised to the ranks of Kingdom by a Leopold I, a Habsburg in 1700<sup>76</sup>, Prussia would prove to be a serious thorn for Austria. Following her failed bid during the earlier part of the decade, towards the end of the 1850s Prussia once again began demanding her rights in Germany, arguing that Austrian concerns for prestige had put Germany at risk. Crown Prince Frederick William of Prussia himself wrote in 1859:

“The Austrians have long been going downhill, but have with a wonderful talent and subtlety succeeded in blinding the world at large and particularly the small German states to this fact; in the eyes of the governments of the small states, Austria kept its own prestige and has plunged its allies into all its own straits”<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> Sked, p. 271

<sup>73</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.73

<sup>74</sup> Union of all the German States under Austria

<sup>75</sup> Union of all the German States under Prussia, with Austria completely excluded

<sup>76</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.26

<sup>77</sup> Kiste, p.59

Austrian policy was clear. Austria could not sacrifice her prestige in Germany. When meeting with the Prince Regent of Prussia in 1860, Francis Joseph was following this advice from his Foreign Office, which Prussia could swallow only as long as Bismarck stayed on the sidelines.

““The Prince Regent must understand that the Imperial Court, even with the best will to further the influence, the prestige and the very power of Prussia, cannot but feel the most legitimate reluctance at this juncture in sacrificing its rights and its position in Germany. Austria has fought honorably against Germany’s hereditary enemy, has suffered losses and money, has had to sacrifice a province in Italy, has seen the minor branches of the Imperial House being illegally dethroned in the peninsula; and now she is expected to retrace her steps in Germany too! The Prince must understand, as a friend of Austria, that he cannot ask such a thing, which would have a disastrous effect internally for the Habsburg Monarchy and cause it to lose face throughout Europe””,<sup>78</sup>

As late as August 16, 1863 the Emperor still ignored the realities which would come to face him. This is when a Congress of German princes assembled in Frankfurt at his request, to hear his plan for a new all German Federation with a popular assembly somewhat still under the control of Austria. The plan aroused the imagination of many of the princes in attendance, but the absence of Prussia as an act of protest, showed that it was not acceptable to all. Bismarck had convinced his King that the invitation to attend had come too late, and that this was an insult to Prussia and the Hohenzollerns<sup>79</sup>. Nevertheless the two countries still allied together in 1864 against Denmark<sup>80</sup>; the last mutual decision between Austria and Prussia with the earlier still the hegemon of Germany.

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<sup>78</sup> Sked, p.180

<sup>79</sup> Kiste, pp.51-53

<sup>80</sup> On November 15, 1863, King Frederick of Denmark died leaving the succession to his other two provinces, Schleswig and Holstein in dispute, Brook-Shepherd, p.83. After a swift Danish defeat at the hands of Austria and Prussia, at the convention of Bad Gastein in August 1865, it was decided that while Prussia would administer Schleswig, Austria would do so over Holstein. In the end both were handed off to the Duke of Augustenborg, Kiste, pp. 57-58.

The next year Prussia demanded that Francis Joseph surrender Germany to her. Austria decided to fight for her claims. Was this decision, obviously also driven by concerns of losing even more prestige, that mistaken? The Earl of Clarendon agreed that for Austria, ““a disastrous war is better than a voluntary disgrace””<sup>81</sup>. Even in retrospect Cassels contends that for Francis Joseph, surrendering the leadership of Germany was “an alternative he could not as head of the House of Habsburg entertain”<sup>82</sup>. An 1866 letter by Francis Joseph suggests the same sentiment; ““One just has to resist as long as possible, do one’s duty to the last, and finally perish with honor””<sup>83</sup>. To believe anything else would happen was to remain in denial, especially considering Prussia’s military revolution in contrast to Austria’s shortcomings<sup>84</sup>.

On June 15, 1866 Prussian troops crossed into Hanover, Saxony and Hesse, forcing Austria and her German allies to retreat. While the Prussians advanced deep into Bohemia, Benedek sent Francis Joseph a letter crying that peace was necessary at any price. Francis Joseph was only concerned with prestige; ““It is impossible to conclude peace. I command that – if it is unavoidable – you should retreat in good order””. Benedek obeyed and on July 2<sup>nd</sup> reformed his army at Königgrätz. The next day at 7:30 am the first shots were fired. By evening a telegram arrived from Benedek proclaiming, ““The disaster to the army which I feared [...] has today occurred””<sup>85</sup>; Austria suffered more than 40,000 casualties. Although at that point Prussia could have advanced into Vienna, she decided Germany was enough. In August the two signed the

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<sup>81</sup> Sked, p.184

<sup>82</sup> Cassels, p.13

<sup>83</sup> Sked, p.234

<sup>84</sup> Prussia’s military revolution was as follows. A new draft system in which all were obliged to three years military service in the regular armed forces, followed by a four year tenure in the reserves. The result was that based on population, Prussia had the greatest proportion of men serving in the front-line army. Prussia also established a permanent military staff, rather than assembling one in times of need. They had superior rifles. Finally, the concept of deploying several full armies which could operate independently and come to each other’s assistance if necessary sealed the deal. Austria’s army on the other hand was underfinanced, lacked a staff system, and had a poor leader in Benedek. “However bravely individual units fought, they were slaughtered in open clashes by far superior Prussian rifles”, Kennedy, p.186. Furthermore a quarter of the forces were needed in Italy, who took the Prussian wars as another opportunity to add what remained of Habsburg Italy into the Federation, Kennedy, pp.184-186.

<sup>85</sup> Cassels, p.15

peace of Prague. Austria was forced to cede all her claims in Germany, Venetia to Italy despite victory on that front, and most of Schleswig, Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Nassau and the city of Frankfurt were absorbed into Prussia<sup>86</sup>. The implications of this defeat were equivalent to a coup de tat in the German world. “The days of the Habsburgs as German emperors were over for good. True, it was only fictional power, the shroud of Charlemagne, which had been surrendered; yet the loss smarted, for that fiction had been part of the dynasty’s glory”<sup>87</sup>.

At home morale was horrible and people began proclaiming that the dynasty no longer served their interest. Abroad, politics were slowly changing for ever. In 1871 after defeating France, Prussia would give birth to the German Empire. This new central European empire would grow to overshadow its eastern neighbor and acquire it as a satellite. In 1879 they became bound by an alliance which would hold throughout World War I<sup>88</sup>. A later visit by the Emperor of Germany in 1888 foreshadowed who would be the senior partner in this alliance. While visiting Vienna in 1888 he attacked the Habsburgs for having too sloppy of an army, for being too friendly with the Slavs, and too gentle with the press<sup>89</sup>. This alliance, German arrogance, and Austrian acquiescence would come to fruition during World War I, and eventually spell the end of the hegemon. In fact it is safe to say that after 1866 Austria can no longer be labeled a hegemon. She had been completely kicked out of Italy and Germany, and all that really remained of her Empire was her and Hungary, with the later continuously demanding sovereignty from the Reichstag. Further, it is a far cry to suggest that she could even contend with any of the other great powers besides possibly the soon to be humiliated France.

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<sup>86</sup> Kiste, pp. 58-59

<sup>87</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 86

<sup>88</sup> After the 1878 war between Russia and Turkey over Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vienna and Berlin signed a treaty on October 7, 1879. In this treaty each agreed to come to each others aid in case the other was attacked, Brook-Shepherd, p.105. Although it took a while to achieve absolute alliance; for example at first Austria did not have to come to Germany’s aid if it was attacked by France, Sked, pp. 247-248.

<sup>89</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 107

## **V. Preventive War and/or Expansion**

### **The Italian War of Prevention**

Prompted by Sardinian mobilization in March of 1859, Austria threatened war unless they demobilized. When Sardinia refused, completely ignoring the ‘patto di Plombières’<sup>90</sup> and its implications, she struck. While Magenta ended indecisively although the Austrians did retreat, Solferino dragged on until news came that the Prussians were on their way to reinforce Austria. Fearing the German combination, French and Italian troops fought their hearts out until a thunderstorm forced the Austrians to retreat. After 37,000 casualties were counted for both sides, Napoleon III and Francis Joseph were shocked at the carnage, and agreed to an armistice which was followed by the Peace of Villafranca<sup>91</sup>.

The implications for Austria were for the time being only internal. This Italian victory added fuel to the Hungarian revolutionary fire, although Austria herself remained rather calm. Unlike the Hungarians who supported the Italian cause, the Austrians were too busy hating the Italians for their defeat to revolt again. Nevertheless the Emperor issued two important democratic documents, the October Diploma<sup>92</sup> and the February Patent<sup>93</sup>. It appears that at least internally Francis Joseph somewhat came to terms that he could not recover the authoritative prestige he once possessed, although abroad he still believed that one day he would recover Italy. He even demanded that despite the obvious, he still retain the right of conferring the Lombard Order of Iron Crown. “It was pathetic display of dynastic vanity and totally at odds with the

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<sup>90</sup> The agreement bound France and Sardinia to combine against Austria. Once victory was achieved Italy would be unified into a confederacy, Savoy and Nice would be ceded to France, and King Victor Emmanuel’s daughter would be married to Napoleon III’s cousin, Napoleon Jerome, Kiste, pp.38-39

<sup>91</sup> Austria ceded Lombardy to Piedmont, giving birth to the Italian Federation. As a complement, she was allowed to keep Venetia, Sked, p. 41

<sup>92</sup> Proclaimed on October 20, 1860, the Parliament was granted the powers to reject and approve taxation, and to cooperate on framing legislation. The Emperor still retained control over the army and foreign policy, Kiste, p.79

<sup>93</sup> Proclaimed in February 1861, it established a two chamber Parliament, which although still saturated with the aristocracy, was mainly represented by the middle classes, Brook-Shepherd, p.80



sense of humiliation which ran throughout the Empire”<sup>94</sup>. Surprisingly he did not want to regain his lost prestige via the Americas. When Napoleon III offered his brother Ferdinand the Crown of Mexico in the fall of 1861, a territory which rivaled the size of his existing empire, Francis Joseph strongly spoke against it, and when his brother accepted the offer, made him renounce his claims to the Habsburg possessions. On April 10, 1864, A Mexican deputation presented the Crown to Maximilian and Carlota. The affair as predicted ended tragically<sup>95</sup>. It is interesting to consider that United States participation in the world war which would end Austria might have been less possible if her southern neighbor at the time was an Austrian Commonwealth.

#### Expansion via Bosnia Herzegovina

In the early 1870s plans for Balkan expansion were very much contained because lacking any allies Austria could not risk war with Russia<sup>96</sup>. The Congress in Berlin following the Peace of San Stefano provided the perfect opportunity<sup>97</sup>. All which was left to do was to walk in as a liberating army. When the advanced regiments entered the territories at the end of July 1878, they did so proclaiming “the Sultan has entrusted his friend, the Emperor, with the protection of their lands’ and that they came as friends to restore order, peace and prosperity”. By the end of October at a cost of 5000 casualties the ‘liberation’ was complete. In a way this fulfilled a prophecy which the Crown Prince had devised in an essay at the age of seventeen entitled, “The position of Vienna and our future”. The basic argument of this paper was that who ever

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<sup>94</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.78

<sup>95</sup> On April 9, 1864 at Miramare, Francis and Maximilian signed the ‘Family Pact’ in which Maximilian relinquished all of his inheritance, with the stipulation that if he loses his throne and is forced to return to Austria, Francis would see to his safety and if possible reestablishment in the Empire, Kiste, pp.54-57. On June 19, 1867 Emperor Maximilian was executed by a revolutionary firing squad, Kiste, p.60

<sup>96</sup> Cassels, pp.22-24

<sup>97</sup> The Congress ended with Austria receiving a mandate to occupy and administer Bosnia Herzegovina as well as to garrison the Sanjak of Novi Bazar. This greatly overjoyed the Emperor, as reflected in a letter written by the Crown Prince who himself saw this as a way to recover some of the past losses. “The joining of two provinces to the Monarchy has as we all knew it would overjoyed Papa...I believe that in Bosnia Herzegovina he is aiming at compensation for Lombardy and Venetia”, Cassels, p.101

controlled the Danube would be a great power, and considering that the river was the artery linking the Monarchy to south-eastern Europe, he saw that as Austria's new mission. Of course this mission as he saw it needed to be carried out not with the use of force, but through the peaceful means of bringing civilization and culture to the Balkans; "he was envisioning for himself the inheritance of a Danubian Empire"<sup>98</sup>.

Troubles between the Czechs and Germans, as well as German fears of a Russian and French alliance of containment, worked to limit these initial goals. Left alone once again to fight any wars he might start, Francis Joseph realigned Bosnia Herzegovina in his plans from a spring board into the east to the last touches he planned to make on his Empire, hoping that the present alliance with Germany and peace with Russia would be a status quo for years to come. Over the next couple of decades the Empire slowly recovered. By the new century it even appeared that the Emperor had regained the respect of Germany whether or not his prestige demanded it any more. On May 8, 1908 for his sixtieth anniversary as Emperor, all the kings and princes of Germany led by Wilhelm II came to the Schönbrunn to pay the emperor the respect he was due. "It was as though they were acknowledging that, despite the transfer of economic, political and military supremacy from Vienna to Berlin, the German world still had only one real emperor"<sup>99</sup>.

Time was ripe for more expansion. On August 15<sup>th</sup> the Hungarian and Austrian ministers decided to officially annex Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>100</sup>.

"The timing gave some credence to the impression that it was intended as a diamond jubilee present for the emperor, but that was certainly not the only reason. During his long and hardly glorious reign, the Austrian nation had suffered a severe loss of prestige in her expulsion from Italy in the south, and her removal from

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<sup>98</sup> Cassels, p.101

<sup>99</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.136

<sup>100</sup> Kiste, pp.125-133, the following quote is on p.130

the German confederation in the north. Only in the south-east could she still dare risk any form of territorial expansion.”

This expansion outraged Europe. The way Austria had acted was simply against the rules of diplomacy and “dynastic decency”<sup>101</sup>. Francis Joseph sent the notifying correspondence only days prior to the annexation and through some mess up England received her notification only after the fact. It also sent Austria on a fatal collision course with Russia and Serbia. The reason it took until 1914 for the collision to occur was that German threats and English diplomacy convinced Serbia to discard her plans for an immediate alliance with Russia against Austria<sup>102</sup>.

## **VI. WWI as a Hegemonic War**

### **The Balkan Wars and the road towards World War I**

In December 1912 a strange meeting took place between Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and Russia. The substance was not strange; the purpose of the meeting was to make peace after the First Balkan War. The circumstances were much stranger, for it appeared more of a family reunion than a diplomatic conference between five nations which would be at each other's throats two years later. For example, Count Alexander Benckendorff of Russia, Count Albert Mensdorff-Pouilly of Austria, and Prince Karl Max Lichnowsky of Germany discovered they were all cousins. In reality this “was the last tranquil image to be reflected in an old world mirror which was about to be shattered forever”<sup>103</sup>. The First Balkan War ended with an overwhelming triumph for the Balkan League against Turkey. The agreement which came out of this meeting on May 30, 1913 cemented this victory. Yet one month later after a dispute over Macedonia, Bulgaria attacked Serbia, this time allying the former enemy Turkey with the Balkan League minus one member - Bulgaria, and giving rise to the Second Balkan War. This war ended in

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<sup>101</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.140

<sup>102</sup> Kiste, pp.134-136

<sup>103</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.143

August, giving birth to a revamped, stronger and larger Serbia<sup>104</sup>. Bosnia Herzegovina was now partially surrounded by Serbia, and Austria-Hungary needed to act to protect these possessions, which although recognized as hers by the Serbian government, were never a voluntary gift. The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo<sup>105</sup> was the necessary catalyst.

Francis Ferdinand's mission in Bosnia was meant to bring the Serbo-Croatians to an equal standing in the multi-national Empire. This went completely against the intentions of a Serbian underground group known as the Black Hand. The purpose of this group of which Francis Ferdinand was well aware, was to unify all Serbians including those in Bosnia Herzegovina. Not only did his plans impede this goal, but as the general inspector of the Empire's armed forces and future Emperor he was a high level target<sup>106</sup>. Knowing all this, rather than discourage him from going, Francis Joseph suggested he should take his wife Sophie with him as well<sup>107</sup>.

In a Nostradamus-type fashion prior to his departure, Francis Ferdinand told his heir Archduke Charles where to find his political testament after his death. Even the Serbian Prime Minister found out about the assassination attempt, but the message he sent failed to reach its destination<sup>108</sup>. On June 28, 1914 Francis Ferdinand and Sophie joined their motorcade in Sarajevo. Ten minutes on the road and one bomb exploded right behind the royal couple wrecking the car to their rear. This did not stop the Archduke from continuing on with his plans to go to the city hall and listen to the mayor's speech. For security purposes the route was changed and this proved the greatest folly of all. The lead driver was not aware of the changes

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<sup>104</sup> Serbia emerged from the Balkan wars with almost double the territory and population she had entered it with, Brook-Shepherd, pp.143-144

<sup>105</sup> Sked, pp.259-260

<sup>106</sup> Kiste, pp.144-145

<sup>107</sup> This was a huge encouragement from Francis Joseph, for he disliked the couple very much because of Sophie's lower status. Hence, even though she was allowed to go as an equal, she had to use different transport for certain parts of the journey, Brook-Shepherd, p.151

<sup>108</sup> Sked, p.260

and while he was turning around after a wrong turn, a disgruntled Gavrilo Princip lamenting the earlier failed assassination found himself ten feet from the royal couple<sup>109</sup>.

The assassination provided the Emperor with the excuse he needed to crush and annex Serbia. The pressure to do so was overwhelming. If Vienna failed to act Austria-Hungary “could never hold its head up again”. Abroad, especially in Berlin it was seen as a weak and incapable power. Domestically, the ethnic rivalries were intensified with fear that the Monarchy was afraid to protect its Balkan possessions. During the crisis Francis Joseph himself uttered the words, ““If the Monarchy must die [...] then it must at least die with honour””<sup>110</sup>. After receiving Germany’s support in response to a letter from Francis Joseph to Wilhelm II<sup>111</sup>, an ultimatum was sent to Serbia on July 23<sup>112</sup>. On the twenty fifth at 5:55pm, the Serbian Prime Minister Nicholas Pašić arrived in person with five minutes to spare to give Serbia’s response. She had acquiesced to every demand but one, official Austro-Hungarian participation in the investigation of the assassination. Having already crossed a critical point, nothing short of complete acquiescence could have appeased Austria.

That same evening the Emperor signed an order for mobilization, urged to do so as soon as possible by the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza, who although against the war initially, contended that once that demand had been made, it needed to be followed up so that the monarchy could retain face. The order took effect as scheduled on the 28<sup>th</sup>, the same day Wilhelm found out about the Serbian reply which he deemed very acceptable. ““A great moral success for Vienna; but with it every reason for war drops away””. Yet his response to Francis

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<sup>109</sup> Kiste, pp.145-146

<sup>110</sup> Both quotes on Brook-Shepherd, p.152

<sup>111</sup> In this letter Francis Joseph desired the elimination of Serbia ““as a power factor in the Balkans””, claiming that this terrorist nation was a threat to all European monarchs, Brook-Shepherd, p.154

<sup>112</sup> Kiste, pp.146-147

Joseph was heavily watered down and omitted key statements like the one previously quoted. Further, having only arrived on the 29<sup>th</sup>, it was much too late to stop anything<sup>113</sup>.

Austria had knowingly launched a total war; this was not done in self-defense, it was one last chance at glory:

“What made it seem so was the need to maintain prestige, along with the fear that relative military decline would close all options in the future. This combination of a need for prestige plus fear of the future meant that a basically irrational view of the Monarchy’s interest could prevail. The element which served to obscure this irrationality was dynastic honor. An Empire according to contemporary clauses could only defend its interests honorably by force of arms; to compromise or give way without a struggle was to invite dishonor. War after all was simply the ‘duel of the nations’ and if gentlemen were still expected to preserve their honor and that of their class by challenging their opponents, the same held true for sovereign and state. To refuse a challenge would be to give up the rank of a great power. Hence Austria’s wars over Italy and Germany, and the decision for war over Bosnia”<sup>114</sup>.

Brook-Shepherd extends this idea even further suggesting that not only did prestige play a role, but that the monarchy had once again reverted to the denial of the late 1800s and Emperor and subjects abound, all believed that victory was very possible:

“there were also psychological reasons which went both wider and deeper, to explain the frenzy of the Habsburg peoples. War had come as a catharsis for that gloomy preoccupation with decay and decline which marked their entry into the twentieth century. They felt, rather like old Francis Joseph, that, if the empire were to die, it should at least die decently. There was even, in August 1914, an unfamiliar sensation that perhaps the monarchy was not going to die after all, but was instead experiencing a strange rebirth. The war brought with it a surge of pride in being a subject of the multi-national empire, and all its nations, as well as all classes, professions and creeds initially shared in the feelings”<sup>115</sup>.

At the time of making its decision, was Austria-Hungary as mistaken as it seems?

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<sup>113</sup> Much of this miscommunication and delay can be blamed on Bethmann-Hollweg who despite initial fear of the war saw it as his chance to make the history books. Brook-Shepherd, pp.160-167; the quote is on p.165

<sup>114</sup> Sked, p.161

<sup>115</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.171

Sked suggests yes. First, by attacking Serbia it was almost guaranteed that Russia would enter the war as an enemy, and even if victory could be achieved, annexing the Serbians would only fuel the nationalist tensions plaguing the fragile Empire. Second, the alliances which had formed guaranteed that this would not be a small conflict, and besides Germany, Austria's allies were inadequate. Third, Austria did not possess the finances or military to fight a great power war. Fourth, although the assassinations originally gave Austria a moral advantage in the conflict, waiting a whole month to declare war took this advantage away. Fifth, it appeared that the monarchy did not need this war to remain as a whole, since for the past few years the domestic environment had greatly improved. "The decision to provoke one therefore cannot really be considered rational"<sup>116</sup>.

### World War I

After the first campaigns of 1914 the Habsburg forces had been reduced by half, and "therefore, the army was more or less a militia"<sup>117</sup> By 1916, the Brusilov Offensive had almost ended this militia altogether, but German reinforcement arrived just in time<sup>118</sup>. Not long after the old Emperor's death, November 21, 1916, the Monarchy began to disintegrate from within. While Hungary took care of her own needs Austria began to starve. By 1917 the famine had reached the armed forces. If food shortage was not enough, inflation cemented that even those with money could no longer afford to feed themselves. Potential reinforcements were deserting to the woods, willing to risk execution rather than fight for an Empire they no longer cared for. Although most of the army still fought on through the autumn of 1918, internal revolutions secured that Austria-Hungary would lose the war far before the enemy crossed her borders<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Sked, pp.260-263; the quote is on p.260

<sup>117</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p. 263

<sup>118</sup> Kennedy, pp.261-262

<sup>119</sup> Sked, p.265-269

What began on June 29, 1918 with an allied recognition of an independent Czech Republic, culminated by September 3<sup>rd</sup> when all three key allies had recognized the self-determination claims of all the Monarchy's nationalities<sup>120</sup>. Emperor Charles needed a quick response. On October 18 he published his 'Peoples Manifesto'<sup>121</sup>. The National Councils which the manifesto sanctioned came about very quickly, but not necessarily to Charles' advantage. On October 28<sup>th</sup> the Czech council passed a resolution creating an independent Czech state, the Croats followed on October 29<sup>th</sup>. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the Emperor formally abdicated<sup>122</sup>, and within three weeks the Empire was dissolved. Oddly enough, the first nation to proclaim its independence was the German-Austrian Republic on October 21<sup>123</sup>. By resorting to war to regain prestige, the Habsburgs had lost not only their international prestige, but their domestic prestige as well. The irony of this is that externally no other power wanted to see the Empire fall, but the strains the war created nurtured a desire for just such a conclusion internally, and after a while the Emperor was forced to accept the inevitable.

For one, when Francis Joseph passed away in 1916, *The Times* demonstrated uncanny sympathy for what at the time, was an enemy ruler:

“The death of the Austrian Emperor removes a figure that seemed to have become a permanent figure of the political configuration of Europe. For more than threescore years he had stood erect while others came and went... When he is borne to his last resting place in the Capuchin vault, the world will reflect that an era which might have been a great era in Habsburg history has closed amid ruin, bankruptcy, blood and tears; but in these reflections there will be place for human compassion with the lot of a man who came as a stripling to the throne, who saw brother, wife, son and nephew perish by violence, who lost the fairest

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<sup>120</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.212

<sup>121</sup> “Following the will of its peoples, Austria shall become a federal state in which each racial component shall form its own state organization in its territory of settlement [...] To those people on whose rights of self-determination the new empire will be built my call goes out to implement the great work through National Councils – made up of the parliamentary deputies of each nation – which shall represent the interests of the peoples with each other, and in contact with my government”, Brook-Shepherd, p.216

<sup>122</sup> Kiste, p.152

<sup>123</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.220-229



provinces of his empire, and who must have ended a long and chequered reign with forebodings of disaster to his House and his dominions graver than any which even he had known”<sup>124</sup>.

Charles was well aware of this sympathy<sup>125</sup>, and upon his accession to the throne, was prepared to put an end to the war. The Entente Powers were only at war with Austria-Hungary as a form of necessity. Germany was the true enemy, and all their plans pointed at strengthening Austria in order to weaken Germany. In March it appeared that a separate peace would be negotiated, but too many demands on behalf of Jan Smuts brought those talks to an end. Then even worse, once the Sixtus Affair hit public news in the spring of 1918, on May 12, 1918 to retain the faith of Germany, Charles signed an agreement which ended Austria-Hungary as an independent force. The parchment signed at Spa bound the two allies into a military union, reaffirmed their political alliance, and made plans for a tariff free economic union. Consequently only four months after the United States had reaffirmed her desire to support a newly liberalized Austro-Hungarian Empire, her Secretary of State, Robert Lansing was forced to write the following memorandum to the White House; ““The Habsburg Monarchy has clearly now become a satellite of Germany. It must be blotted out as an empire””. The president’s response, brief: “I agree”<sup>126</sup>.

## **VII. Coming to Terms with the New Status Quo**

### **Denial: Failure to Readjust Self-perception**

#### *After 1866*

Despite the obvious need to readjust her self-perception, after her defeat to Prussia, Austria continued to demonstrate the blatant arrogance of a dead power believing itself still alive. On October 30, 1866, only two months after the Peace of Prague, Francis Joseph was

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<sup>124</sup> Kiste, pp.149-150

<sup>125</sup> For example, Lloyd George promised that if Austria-Hungary could find a way out of the German tentacles which bound her in the war, he would help her revitalize herself as a liberal empire which would play the same role in Central Europe that Great Britain played on the high seas, proclaiming for Austria, ““a mission in the future even grater than her mission in the past””, Kiste, p.152.

<sup>126</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.200-202; both quotes on p.211

discussing plans with his Foreign Minister<sup>127</sup> about building an anti-Prussian front based on the remaining South German kingdoms<sup>128</sup> and other enemies of Berlin<sup>129</sup>. While being crowned the King of Hungary, Francis Joseph promised not to only preserve but to increase the territory of St. Stephen<sup>130</sup>. When handed the privilege of holding the world's next Exhibition of Industry and Art which took place in 1867, Austria fervently built hotels, cafés and restaurants to demonstrate to all foreigners that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was still a major power of Europe<sup>131</sup>. Ironically it was during this Exhibition that Vienna's stock market collapsed for the whole world to see<sup>132</sup>. Even the Crown Prince Rudolf was urging that the time was ripe for the Dual-Monarchy to expand its influence in the Balkans, via trade, the export of culture, and intensive diplomacy, despite any opposition Russia might pose. He even went as far as to tell his wife Stephanie while in Constantinople, ““one day you will be Empress here!””<sup>133</sup>

Three years' compulsory military service was introduced increasing the total size to 800,000 men. The infantry was equipped with breech-loading rifles, and the artillery was given the most modern weapons. Nonetheless the conservative element remained. While achieving much progress with his reforms Archduke Albrecht “seemed unable to understand that improved conditions of service would do more to raise the morale of officers without private means than the smart uniforms and military bands on which he insisted for this purpose, the cost of which

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<sup>127</sup> Newly hired former Prime Minister of Saxony, and long time enemy of Bismarck, Baron Frederick Ferdinand von Beust

<sup>128</sup> At the Peace of Prague it was decided that kingdoms and principalities of the Catholic south were to be left sovereign for the time being, Brook-Shepherd, p.85

<sup>129</sup> This last seed of denial was stomped out in 1871, when after defeating France, Prussia took control of the southern Catholic kingdoms giving rise to the German Empire, Kiste, p.65.

<sup>130</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.91

<sup>131</sup> Kiste, p.65

<sup>132</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.100

<sup>133</sup> Cassels, p.159

they were compelled to meet out of their inadequate pay”<sup>134</sup>. Johann Salvator is a great example of what happened to the typical officer if he suggested changes for the system.

A veteran of Königgrätz, Salvator was well aware of the heroism the Austrians had showed<sup>135</sup>, and believed that with modernized training and equipment, they could defeat any army in battle. In 1875 he published his ideas in 148 pages entitled, ‘Reflections on the Organization of the Austrian Artillery’. The Emperor did not approve for superfluous reasons; ““In Vienna I found the exalted personages in a great state of agitation. The Emperor, Albrecht and Wilhelm gave me a tremendous scolding. The gist of the long dissertation was that though my facts were correct, for political and disciplinary reasons I should not have written the pamphlet””. A letter by the Emperor suggested the same concerns for propriety:

““A brochure entitled, ‘Reflections on the Austrian Artillery’ of which Archduke Johann Salvator has acknowledged himself to be the author has recently been published. In it he discusses circumstances relating to official and personnel matters in that branch of the service to which he belongs, in a manner incompatible with and severely damaging to order and discipline, the foundations of the army’[...]Franz Joseph. Vienna, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1875””.

Much of Salvator’s suggested changes were founded in his belief that modern warfare required a training which prepared the soldier to fight as an individual rather than as a blind obedient. He was a fervent believer in Moltke’s philosophy that ‘Superiority is no longer to be found in the weapon but in the hand that carries it’<sup>136</sup>.

### *The Imperial Family after WWI*

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<sup>134</sup> Cassels, p.70. Here are some examples which Cassels provides as critiques of the conditions of service. There was a small likelihood for achieving greatness in this army because the prestigious positions were still very much in the hands of aristocrats. The highest rank most officers could achieve was colonel, and those were the lucky few. Further, officers were usually stationed in small provincial towns where they could not even enjoy the little entertainment available because of the debt most of them had acquired, as a result of trying to keep up appearances with their inferior pay, such as the uniforms discussed previously, Cassels, pp.66-70.

<sup>135</sup> Although the Austrians lost, they demonstrated the courage of Sparta’s 300. At the end of the day when defeat was eminent, the Austrian I Corps following an order of attack marched gallantly to lose 279 officers and 10, 000 men in less than half an hour, in a way at least saving the honor of the Emperor and his Empire, Cassels, p.83

<sup>136</sup> Cassels, pp.84-136; the first quote is on p.85, the extended quote is on p. 187.

Even after his abdication Charles expected not only to return to power, but to regain most of what he had lost. In March of 1919 he sent a letter to King Alfonso of Spain asking him to warn the allies that Bolshevism would swallow up the old Empire, and the only way to stop this was the delivery of food to end famine, and support for a revived Habsburg Confederation covering the old Empire. The allies declined. Eventually he had to choose between renouncing all his claims or exile. Charles responded with the 'Feldkirch Manifesto', which proclaimed his exile a voluntary self-banishment and the new republican government null and void. "It was a symbolic if pathetic gesture to maintain the pride of the Habsburgs and not to admit defeat". On October 20, 1921 Charles began an attempted coup in Hungary. Three days later he surrendered. At this point the allies feared another Napoleonic escape from exile, and ensured Charles's tenure in Madeira by blocking all private resources. Tragically the exiled Emperor died in April of the next year from bronchitis. *The Times* looked at his fate with a degree of sympathy. "A pathetic figure disappears from the world [...] More sinned against than sinning, the victim of circumstances he had not created and was powerless to contend against, he deserved pity rather than censure"<sup>137</sup>. Fortune improved for his heir in the 1930s during the chancellorship dictatorship phase of the First Republic. On January 7, 1937 a meeting between Chancellor Schuschnigg and Archduke Otto (who by the way has been termed 'The Pretender') finalized plans for a restoration<sup>138</sup>. Nevertheless Hitler was aware of these plans, and the threat he posed caused Chancellor Schuschnigg to pull away from what might have been a very destabilizing plan.

After World War II Otto continued the struggle for his rights in Austria. On May 8, 1956 he was granted Austrian citizenship, although as retribution of February 21, 1958 he renounced

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<sup>137</sup> Kiste, pp.155-156, both quotes are on p.155

<sup>138</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 303-305

his dynastic claims. Nevertheless his goal was to use politics to his advantage. He argued that a constitutional monarchy proved a great solution to republics ridden by party struggles and special interests. Foolish old customs such as using the Imperial china during official dinners led to one final and exhausting demand of him, to renounce his membership in the house of Habsburg-Lorraine; he acquiesced on May 31, 1961. Otto coped with his fate in the same manner as his father who coped in the same manner as the Empire before them. He refused to come to acceptance, and as the current nature of the Second Republic demonstrates, sacrificed everything for nothing<sup>139</sup>.

Acceptance: Success at Adjusting Self-perception

*The Compromise of 1867*

The internal politics after the defeat to Prussia did suggest that the Emperor was coming to acceptance that some adjustments were necessary. One such change was making sure that Hungary did not follow Italy's and Germany's path. This began with the signing of the *Ausgleich*<sup>140</sup> on May 29, 1867. A few weeks later, On June 8<sup>th</sup> Francis Joseph resigned his claims as Emperor of Hungary, to receive in exchange the crown of St. Stephen and the kingship of Hungary. A month and a half later the *Ausgleich* officially entered into force as Law XII<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>139</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 421-424

<sup>140</sup> The *Ausgleich* was the preliminary draft of the agreement which would lead to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kiste, pp.59-60

<sup>141</sup> Hungary was granted its own parliament, cabinet, virtual autonomy over domestic affairs and the power to determine the terms of service, quartering & financial support of her regiments. Nonetheless the two would share an army, navy and finance ministry. German was still the official language of the army and government although both Hungarian and German could be used to issue military orders. The Emperor still retained supreme command over the army, the power to appoint and dismiss the Hungarian Prime Minister and the power to suspend or dissolve the Hungarian Parliament. The previous is a merger of: Kiste, pp.59-60, Brook-Shepherd, pp.91-93, and Sked, 198. Cassels summarized the result as "a secular version of the Trinity". The Compromise created three Parliaments: one in Vienna, one in Budapest, and one consisting of delegations of twenty members of the upper houses and forty members from the lower houses of both Parliaments; three joint Ministers: foreign affairs, defense, and finance; three armies: an Austrian Militia, Hungarian Militia, and a combined army; finally three roles for the Emperor: Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary and Commander in Chief of the joint army, Cassels, p.18

Considering the Compromise was a novel move for the Emperor, a quick survey is in order to see what were the costs and benefits associated with this concession. There were of course certain costs. The Czechs, Tyrolese, Poles, Slovenes and Romanians boycotted this Magyar favoritism<sup>142</sup>. The situation was not helped by a set of Hungarian education laws between 1897 and 1907 which began with requirements that all teachers must know Magyar and teach in it, and went so far as to demand that town names and tomb stones be in Hungarian as well. Those who refused were prosecuted and/or jailed. Foreign policy also became dependent on Hungarian desires; for example, the Hungarian hatred of the Slavs increased tensions between the Empire and Russia. Considering the agreement had to be renewed every ten years, every decade afforded Hungary another chance to demand more from Austria, and Sked contends that if not for World War I, by 1917 Hungary would have declared independence. The military structure led to many clashes between the two, culminating in the years of 1903 – 1906 when Hungarian demands for their own artillery resulted in orders to invade and occupy Hungary, although a settlement saw to it that they were not carried out. The two separate governments limited the flexibility of the Empire which was required during wartime. At times Hungarian protectionist practices would even get in the way of benefits of the merger, such as when they refused the linking of rails with Turkey and Serbia to protect their tariff policies. The Hungarians also blocked all attempts at land reform.

Yet the Compromise was no Austrian tragedy. By maintaining the army at the Emperor's command, it made Hungary dependent on Austria. Further the Hungarian militia, which was known as the Honvedseg, was denied the luxury of artillery, and was led by a commander in chief appointed by the Emperor. Both parties profited economically thanks to the development of rail, expansion of the banking and credit system, and from regional market integration. The

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<sup>142</sup> Cassels, p.20

union allowed Austria a peaceful solution to retain the wealth and manpower necessary to play a prominent role in European politics<sup>143</sup>. Also despite the nationalistic tensions which Hungary created in her treatment of her various minorities, the Empire still fought rather unified during World War I, although after the war, these tensions were most likely the reason Austria emerged a fragment of herself. Nonetheless Brook-Shepherd paints a rather grim analogy of what the Compromise meant for the declined Hegemon:

“Even had a magic formula of defederation been produced afterwards, it could never have been launched, given that million of Roumanians, Croats, Serbs, Slovaks and Ruthenes were locked by the king-Emperor’s oath into the Hungary of St Stephen. In chess, the end does not come when the king is captured, or his crown toppled. It comes when he is unable to move to any other square on the board. That was the position of Francis Joseph after 1867, and he had checkmated himself”<sup>144</sup>.

### *The People after 1866*

After Königgrätz while the government lamented, the public who was ready to accept the monarchy’s actual standing in the world, seemed unconcerned about the loss of prestige. In fact a large outdoor summer carnival was planned on the day that the news reached Vienna of the defeat at Königgrätz, and the two thousand participants at this carnival “drank and danced away in the Prater as though they were celebrating victory”. Rather than hating the Prussians for what they had done, the Austrians seemed to welcome their leadership. In 1868 the ‘Deutscher Volksverein’ or “German People’s Union was founded in Vienna, and later that year the ‘Third Assembly of German Marksmen’ met at the Prater. The defeat of France and the rise of the German Empire led to as much celebration in Austria as it did in Germany, with Austrian students shouting pan-German slogans. Occasionally there was some discontent over the loss,

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<sup>143</sup> Sked, pp.194-250

<sup>144</sup> Brook-Shepherd, p.92

but rather than blame Germany, this was solved with the scapegoat of anti-Semitism<sup>145</sup>.

Nevertheless not all enjoyed this new inferiority, and many turned to suicide as a form of coping.

In fact in one of her memoirs, Walburga Ehrengarde Helena Lady Paget, reported that she was cautioned to stay clear of the Prater in the early morning to give the patrols chances to remove all the corpses from the trees.

### *The First Republic*

In order to receive the recognition she needed after World War I, the First Republic was forced to make enormous concessions reducing her original 30 million population to a mere 6.5 million, and her territory from 180,000 square miles to around 50,000. “Vienna had been transformed from one of the greatest seats of European power, whose size and make-up matched its status as the capital of a multi-national empire, to the over-heavy and badly positioned center of a small republic<sup>146</sup>. If this primary acceptance of prestige loss was dynamic, the reaction to Hitler’s invasion some seventeen years later was downright pervasive.

As Brook-Shepherd concludes, “Austria’s darkest hour was not her finest”. Following Schuschnigg’s orders that no German blood shall be spilled, not a single shot was fired, not even in protest. The Germans simply marched in at dawn followed by Hitler in the afternoon. Three days later Hitler gave his speech proclaiming for Austria a new mission, ““The oldest eastern province of the German nation shall from now on be the youngest bulwark of the German nation [...] I can in this hour report before history the fulfillment of the greatest aim of my life – the entry of my homeland into the German Reich””<sup>147</sup>. In the election which followed Hitler was elected Chancellor by 99.73%. Only 17,000 votes were against him; 11,929 said ‘No’, the other

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<sup>145</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.94-100; the quote in on p.94

<sup>146</sup> Hungary was also forced to pay a heavy price, with her territory and population being cut by two thirds, Brook-Shepherd, pp. 246-250

<sup>147</sup> The first quote is on Brook-Shepherd p. 325, the second on p. 328



5776 were spoiled. Within one year Austria would disappear from existence with her legal title replaced to 'The Reichsgaue of the Ostmark'; her chancellor reduced to the rank of 'Governor of the Austrian Provincial Government', her crown jewels taken from the Hofburg to Nurember, and with Hitler renaming her streets<sup>148</sup>.

### *The Second Republic*

During WWII Austria was not a part of the Allies' post war plans. The United States and Britain had plans to merge her with Germany; it was in fact the Soviet Union who could much easily annex a smaller Austria, which suggested restoring her independence after the war<sup>149</sup>. The later plan was adhered to, but Austria had to wait until 1955 for the last occupying soldier to leave. The price for her freedom was the declaration of neutrality, a status she would adhere to throughout the Cold War, and which would facilitate her with the ability to enact some political leverage as a key negotiator between the United States and the Soviet Union<sup>150</sup>. The fall of the later sent Austria on a new path which she is yet to complete.

When the Iron Curtain fell Austria's old subjects became free to interact with their former keeper. Brook-Shepherd believes that in no way did Austria possess intentions to rebuild her empire; "By now, that concept lay beyond the psychological as well as the physical bounds of the republic's strength". Instead the Empire's old infrastructure which still connected the Danube Basin could now allow Austria to function as a hub between east and west European trade. In 1991 during the Gulf War, as a member of the Security Council, Austria was forced to contribute to the war effort, posing in essence a challenge to her previous neutrality. This was a juncture she would cross again in 1994 when a referendum was taken whether she should join the EU; 66.4% were for it. There were two clear benefits in joining. First, although she could not lead this multi-

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<sup>148</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.309-353

<sup>149</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.357-373

<sup>150</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.387-418

national community as she once had her own, she could advise the EU on how to make itself work. Second, it posed a tempting way to counterbalance the threat of a reunified Germany. As articulated by her Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel, ““Austria must stop being a passive spectator hiding behind neutrality imposed after the Second World War”” ; “If we want our say in the international community in the questions that affect us, such as the environment, we must be prepared to take responsibility for our part in security policy”<sup>151</sup>.

### **VIII. Society as a Mirror**

Gilpin also found in his study that decadence accompanies the hegemonic cycle. Athens, Alexandria and Rome were all cultural centers during their hegemony which fell into decadence as they declined. It should not come as a surprise that the same is true for Austria. As a society grows more affluent it becomes corrupted and its moral values decline. Once the state’s prestige begins to decline, the pessimism which follows causes this still somewhat suppressed decadence to take over society. Consequently, this decadence hinders most attempts for rejuvenation, and only accelerates the change under way<sup>152</sup>.

That Austrians did not seek rejuvenation should not come as too much of a surprise considering that most believed living was a prerequisite servitude necessary to achieve the blessing of death; hence pending decline went hand in hand with this notion. Life was reserved for serving god and his appointee on earth, the Emperor. Under Metternich’s police state the culture of Biedermeier<sup>153</sup> developed in Austria. The nobility had long escaped politics via the arts, and the reactionary bureaucracy forced most of the growing middle class to do the same. Yet it would be a gross overstatement to say that no intellectuals flourished in Austria during her

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<sup>151</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp. 429-449; the first quote is on p.441, the second and third on p. 449.

<sup>152</sup> Gilpin, p.165 & p.190

<sup>153</sup> Johnston defines Biedermeier as “Austria’s enduring combination of political resignation with aesthetic delectation and Catholic piety”, Johnston, p. 19

decline. In fact it is more appropriate to say that most intellectuals flourished in Austria. The likes of Karl Lueger, Carl & Anton Menger, Hans Gross, Hans Kelsen, Viktor Adler, Karl Renner, Otto Wagner, Rosa Mayreder, Ernst Mach, and Sigismund Freud often frequented her streets, and these were the parents of science, psychology, medicine, architecture, arts, aviation, feminism and ...<sup>154</sup>.

Sadly the country within which they resided used bureaucratic red tape to oppose any change. Consequently many of these elites saw their revelations come to fruition in more progressive states such as the United States than in their own home town, and many other great potential intellectuals fell victim to therapeutic nihilism. One stark example is how in 1911, Gunther Burstyn's revolutionary invention (the tank) was rejected by the military as unworkable. This bureaucratic inertia was reinforced by the nobility and lower classes which hated the industrial revolution, the changes it brought, and its greatest supporters the bourgeoisie. The Holocaust several decades saw this anger come to fruition in a mass slaughter of Austrian intellectuals, most of whom were Jewish<sup>155</sup>.

Nevertheless despite a huge division between the conservative agricultural upper & lower classes and the liberal industrial bourgeoisie, the country was united in its belief that the Empire would always exist. Max Graf summarized the pathos which filled Austria prior to 1914. "We who were born in Vienna, and grew up there, had no idea, during the city's brilliant period before the first world war that this epoch was to be the end [...] We enjoyed the splendid city which was so elegantly beautiful, and never thought that the light which shone over it could ever be that of a colorful sunset"<sup>156</sup>. After all it was only in 1857 that Francis Joseph ordered the medieval walls protecting and separating the inner city from the suburbs torn down, engaging the

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<sup>154</sup> Johnston, pp. 1-50

<sup>155</sup> Johnston, pp. 51- 75

<sup>156</sup> Johnston, p. 31

city of Vienna on a fervent rebuilding agenda screaming a reverence for the past and a belief in a stable future<sup>157</sup>. Ironically the War Office was only completed in 1913. For this reason in 1914, peasant, intellectual, and noble alike joined the army blind to the future which was to befall their beloved country.

“So, what was the real temper of Vienna as this ‘City of Lights’ entered on its last years as an imperial capital? The answer – as so often in its past – seems to have been a mood of foreboding held at arm’s length by frivolity, of self-doubt deadened by self-indulgence”<sup>158</sup>. Cassels entitles this attitude of the Austrians during these years of decline as *gemütlich*<sup>159</sup>. Most of the citizens did not care for politics for they could play no role; after all the oppression in the late 1840s had made this very clear. Nevertheless life anywhere else was unthinkable, however fragile and uncertain Austria’s future.

“To hold things lightly, to enjoy them while one had them but not to try to cling to them, to consider that it did not matter if one had nothing to eat on Monday provided one had a good time on Sunday, such was the temperament of the Viennese. It was this attitude to life which made the city what one gay young foreign Prince described as ‘heavenly’, and of which another delighted visitor wrote ‘I doubt that one could amuse oneself more in Paradise’”<sup>160</sup>.

An account of Vienna written in 1938 by an English man walking her streets<sup>161</sup> suggests that during the interwar period much of this overconfidence had evaporated while nostalgia for the glorious past greatly increased. Playing the role of a tour guide, Crankshaw points at a building or a field and acknowledges the nostalgia associated with it. This helps provide much

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<sup>157</sup> The Opera House was designed in fifteenth-century Italian style; The Parliament was reflected the classical Greek Style; the Town Hall followed Belgian Gothic; the University, Burgtheater, and two Court Museums were in Renaissance style, Johnston, p. 148.

<sup>158</sup> Brook-Shepherd, pp.132-133

<sup>159</sup> “It is a compound of agreeable, cozy, tolerant, warm hearted, and there is a hit of kindly laughter in it; it conjures up pictures of golden autumn days, light shining on a glass of wine, the comforting warmth of a immediate pleasure in simple things,” Cassels, p.59

<sup>160</sup> Cassels, p.61

<sup>161</sup> For a much broader evaluation which ties in the architecture and arts of Vienna with her decline, please refer to the whole text.

insight into the mood of Vienna at her darkest hour. There is much in his narrative to reflect the greatness of Vienna as he contends at one point that had the Magyars retained their control, Asia would have been much closer to the Atlantic than it is today. He reflects on her opportunities for greatness, her legacy, and her fundamental role in Europe. For this very reason, the city still retains the gaiety of an Imperial Capital. Yet the key word he uses in describing Vienna is as decadent. He describes Vienna as not expecting much for her future, having laid herself down to die in self pity rather than go out in one final hurrah, while hinting several times at the fact that only a cataclysmic event will resolve her current state; “the culture of decadence has been in Austria stronger than anywhere else and has persisted longer and more fruitfully. Traces remain to this day. Vienna may be doomed, but the Austrian peasant [...] is able to keep a civilized way of life running like a streak of gold through dark ages”<sup>162</sup>.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Hegemons rise and fall, that is what they do. Their self-perception lags behind reality. Consequently their coping with this harsh reality tends to pattern the realist framework. At first they deny that anything has changed. Once reality hits they oppose it. If initial opposition fails they will either attempt to expand themselves or launch a war of prevention so as to impede their neighbor's expansion; whichever route they take relative gains will be the driving force. Once prevention and/or expansion fails the system is often left very destabilized, and if the members of the system especially the hegemon are unable to readjust roles in a peaceful manner, a massive war will occur. After stabilization the ex-hegemon will accept its new role, although ghosts of the glorious past will often rear their head. This is just how the system works.

Austria is no different. Even with Napoleon camping in her capital she refused to acknowledge anything had changed. When this no longer proved possible she opposed rather

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<sup>162</sup> Crankshaw, pp. 5-245.

than incorporated a new status quo; hence the violent oppression of the revolutions in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, her backstabbing during the Crimean, and her war against Prussia. She attempted to forestall the inevitable, via prevention against Italy and expansion in the Balkans. Austria needed to change her tone. Instead she refused, and WWI was the result. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century she accepted an inferior role, yet made certain to make Vienna the center of World attention periodically.

Austria was the embodiment of the Old Order just like Rome embodied the ancient era. She was the epitome of the combination of dynasty, Catholicism, authoritarianism, and hierarchy which characterized Europe after the fall of Rome. For this reason alone her hegemonic status beyond the borders she actually occupied can not be denied; while this order existed, her monarch was above all others in Europe. After the Enlightenment the system began to change but its champion could not. The new system represented the common man, Protestantism, democracy and equality. We are living under this system right now, and under the hegemony of its champion, the United States. In World War I the two champions inadvertently met head to head for the first time, and in a gentleman's manner completed the transition which was long in the making. Austria perceived herself to embody prestige as a glorious dynastic empire, in an era when prestige was conveyed by state capability. For this reason rather than considering her actual ability to win wars, driven by honor she went down swinging.

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